

EDITOR'S NOTE: One of the most misunderstood features of the Montana corrections system is its prisons and how they work together as a network of facilities to complement the various facilities. Here is a summary of Montana's prisons, their differing roles and the needs they serve.

The Montana corrections system includes a network of five prisons that are an integral part of a coordinated effort to appropriately manage offenders in a way to make use of the resources available for meeting the needs of those offenders. The state has four prisons for male offenders and one for female offenders.

The male prisons are Montana State Prison (MSP) in Deer Lodge, Crossroads Correctional Center at Shelby, Cascade County regional prison in Great Falls and Dawson County regional prison at Glendive. MSP is operated by the state, the regional prisons are county-run, and Crossroads is the only privately operated prison in the state.

The prisons for males work in concert with one another to balance population with capacity and offender needs with available services. Inmates are moved among the four prisons to ensure that balance is maintained and those needs are met. Offenders sentenced to prison may spend time at two or more of the prisons during the course of their incarceration. It's not unusual for an offender to move multiple times to and from one or more of the prisons during his sentence.

Unlike prison systems in other more-populous states, Montana does not have multiple stand-alone prisons at which inmates are likely to spend their full incarceration. Montana State Prison, with nearly 1,500 inmates and staff of more than 600, is the flagship of the network, providing an array of services and programs not available at the other smaller facilities. Crossroads houses about 550 state inmates, the Great Falls prison has about 150 and the Glendive prison has about 140.

Each prison has its own warden, but all are managed under authority of the MSP warden. The Contract Placement Bureau plays an integral role in smooth operation of the prison system because it is responsible for managing inmate placement at the private and regional prisons.

Inmates move among the prisons for a number of reasons. An inmate could be moved from MSP to Crossroads or a regional prison because:

- MSP has reached capacity and another prison has some empty beds.
- An inmate does not have immediate needs for special services at MSP such as medical, dental, mental health and sex offender treatment.
- Separation needs; an inmate has problems getting along with other inmates at his custody level.
- An inmate at MSP should be at a lower custody level but no room at that level is available at MSP
- An inmate wants to enroll in a program offered elsewhere, such as the virtual welding course at Glendive or the dog-training program at Shelby.
- Moving an inmate will improve his behavior in relation to staff or other inmates.

An inmate might move to MSP because:

- He needs specialized treatment as a sex offender or for chemical dependency.
- He wishes to participate in an industries program.
- He needs medical attention available only through the infirmary.
- He requires placement in a higher custody level that is not available elsewhere.
- He requires more intense mental health treatment.

The cost per day at the prisons varies due to the disparity in the services and programming provided and the custody levels of the inmates housed there. The cost per day at Crossroads is \$63.98 for each inmate. The cost per day at Montana State Prison is \$94.19. The higher rate is because MSP functions, to a great extent, as a special-needs facility in the Montana prison network.

MSP has specialized programs and services that are not available elsewhere. It has:

- A full infirmary that is capable of providing inmates with extensive and chronic medical and dental needs
- Intensive treatment units for chemical dependent and methamphetamine-addicted inmates
- Sex offender treatment

- Treatment for inmates with serious mental health issues
- Capability of housing the highest-custody inmates, which requires higher staffer levels